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SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

PSYCHO

- edited by ALAN HEWETSON -

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MARY SHELLEY, WHEN SHE WROTE MY BIOGRAPHY, CALLED HER WORK 'FRANKENSTEIN'-- WHICH IS NOT MY NAME BUT THE NAME OF MY CREATOR...

... SHE SUBTITLED HER BOOK: 'THE MODERN PROMETHEUS,' WHICH TO MY WAY OF THINKING IS QUITE A JOKE -- DO YOU KNOW WHO PROMETHEUS WAS?

"...PROMETHEUS WAS A GREEK GOD -- SOME SAY HE CREATED MAN BY FORMING AN IMAGE FROM THE CLAY AND WATER OF PHOCIS, INTO WHICH ATHENA BREATHED LIFE... HE CAUSED MAN, ALONE OF THE SUN AND THE MOON, HE TAUGHT MEN NUMBERS AND ALPHABETS -- HOW TO BUILD SHIPS AND SAIL THE SEAS -- HOW TO WORK THE FIELDS AND TAME WILD ANIMALS -- PROMETHEUS TAUGHT MAN ALL HIS HUMAN ACTS..."

"...VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN IS NO PROMETHEUS, MODERN OR OTHERWISE, HE IS JUST A FOOL WHO DABBLED WITH IMAGINATION AND LOST UNFORTUNATELY, I AM THE RESULTS OF HIS FAILURE..."

WELL -- DON'T YOU THINK IT WAS PRETTY FUNNY OF MARY SHELLEY TO CALL VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN THE MODERN PROMETHEUS? EH?

I AM A MISERABLE AND CORRUPT BEING -- -- MADE MISERABLE BY THE HUMANITY WHO REJECTS ME --

-- MADE CORRUPT OUT OF DESPAIR!

...BUT CORRUPTION IS NOT A VICE UNIQUE TO ME -- THIS PARTICULAR FRAGMENT OF MY SAGA TELLS THE TALE OF A MAN EVEN MORE CORRUPT THAN I -- EVEN MORE CORRUPT THAN CORRUPTION ITSELF...

THE SAGA OF THE FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

...RUMANIA--BEFORE IT WAS RUMANIA--WAS TRANSYLVANIA...

...DRACULA--BEFORE HE WAS DRACULA--WAS A MAN!...

...BUT THE CARPATHIAN ALPS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE CARPATHIAN ALPS--

BITTERLY TREACHEROUS AND FREEZING--CUTTING INTO THE FIBRES OF EVEN SUCH A MAN AS THIS, WHO IS NO LONGER A MAN--BUT A HUMAN MONSTER--BY HIS OWN ADMISSION...

...THE MAN-MONSTER HAS BEEN FORCED BY POLICE AND OUTRAGED CITIZENS TO FLEE TO THESE CHILLING HILLS, FORCED TO LIVE WITHIN THEM A NOMADIC LIFE--FOR THEY SEARCH HIM OUT EVEN HERE, AND HAVE REDUCED THIS MONSTER'S STEEL NERVES TO BRITTLE TIN NERVES...

...FRANKENSTEIN--BEFORE HE WAS FRANKENSTEIN--WAS NOTHING!...

...HE GROPES ABOUT THESE HILLS, AVOIDING HUMAN CONTACT THOUGH HE NEEDS THE COMPANY OF OTHERS MORE THAN HE NEEDS ANYTHING--HE STALKS THE CRAGS AND SPEAKS TO THE WILD GOATS WHO DO NOT SHUN HIM AS DO WILD HUMANS SHUN HIM--THEY CARE NOT HOW THIS MAN LOOKS--THEY CARE ONLY HOW HE ACTS--AND HE IS A KIND MAN...

WRITTEN BY ALAN HEWETSON
ILLUSTRATED BY CESAR LOPEZ

...AND SO THE SAGA TAKES FORM AND SUBSTANCE--EACH FRAGMENT TELLING THE TALE OF A DAY OR TWO IN THE EVENTFUL LIFE OF THIS 'MONSTER'...

...IT IS WISE TO SHUDDER IN ANTICIPATION--FOR THE EVENTS SOON TO UNFOLD IN THIS ROCK-FACE ARE A FRAGMENT FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER CHOOSES NOT TO RECALL--FOR AGAIN, AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN, HE HEARD THE CRY-

DIE, FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER!

...REST HERE TILL YOUR LEG HEALS -- I WILL TEND AND FEED YOU TILL YOU ARE BETTER...
...THEN BACK OUT YOU GO TO YOUR WORLD OF NEVER ENDING CLIMBING AND WALKING ABOUT...
...WE ARE NOT SO UNALIKE THAT AN ANALOGY CANNOT BE DRAWN...
...I TOO WALK ABOUT ON DANGEROUS PLATEAUS-- ROUND AND ROUND IN CIRCLES...
THERE IS AN UNUSUAL LIGHT IN THIS PIT-- WHAT IS THE SOURCE?
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS -- COFFINS -- FLAMING TORCHES MOUNTED ON THE WALL? WHAT HAVE I UNCOVERED?-- SOME DEPRAVED DEN OF EVIL?-- OR -- WHAT?

...?...

FIEND!
AHHHH!

--HE IS NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY NORMAL HUMAN--HE ATTACKS WITHOUT QUESTIONING --WITHOUT EXPRESSION --EXCEPT THE HUMAN EMOTION ANGER!--
BUT HIS STRENGTH IS UNMEASURABLE NO MAN COULD KNOCK ME DOWN SO SIMPLY-EVEN WITH A SURPRISE ATTACK!

ACHHH!-- HIS BLOOD IS MUCCUSED!!
--WHAT ARE YOU?
I WON'T ANSWER YOU -- BUT YOU WILL ANSWER ME! WHO ARE YOU?
NO-ONE SENDS ME ANYWHERE!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE--OR WHAT YOU ARE -- BUT I MEANT YOU NO HARM WHEN I OPENED YOR COFFIN!
YOU DON'T KNOW? I THOUGHT YOU WERE SENT HERE TO KILL ME!
YOU DON'T KNOW WHO I AM!-- YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM!-- WHAT MANNER OF MAN DOES NOT KNOW WHAT A VAMPIRE IS? ... AND WHAT MAN HAS NEVER HEARD OF DRACULA -- LORD OF ALL VAMPIRES AND MASTER OF ALL MEN?
I KNOW NOTHING OF YOU OR YOUR KIND--
--SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST TELL ME!
SIT YOURSELF DOWN THERE, MY FRIEND -- AND WE'LL EXCHANGE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES!
YOU CALL ME FRIEND--YET YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ME--YOU ARE INDEED A STRANGE FELLOW DRACULA, AND I ANTICIPATE WE'LL HAVE A MOST INTERESTING DIALOG!
YOU ARE NOT HUMAN?
NO MAN HAS EVER CALLED ME FRIEND- JUST AS I HAVE NEVER HAD CAUSE TO CALL A HUMAN A FRIEND..
NO!

...TWO BEINGS SIT ON THE EDGE OF A MOUNTAIN TELLING TALES WE NEED NOT TELL HERE AGAIN, FOR THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD AND RE-TOLD A ***THOUSAND TIMES,*** AND ONLY TO THESE TWO BEINGS ARE THEY ***NEW***...

...TWO BEINGS SIT ON THE EDGE OF A MOUNTAIN--***NEITHER ONE*** IS ***HUMAN***-- YET ALL THEY SPEAK OF IS HUMANITY--

--HOW THEY ***LOATHE IT***--

--HOW THEY ***HATE, DESPISE*** AND SOMEWHAT ***FEAR*** IT--

--AND WITH SO MANY COINCIDENCES OF ***CIRCUMSTANCES*** AT THEIR ***DISPOSAL,*** ON WHICH THEY ***BASE*** AN ***ILL-THOUGHT-OUT LAISON***--

--A ***FRIENDSHIP UNTESTED,*** AS ALL NEW ***FRIENDSHIPS ARE***--

THIS IS LEAH...
--LEAH-- YOU ARE THE ONE WHO ATTACKED MY NECK-- TRYING TO SAVE DRACULA FROM MY STRANGLEHOLD...
...I AM SORRY MY BLOOD DISGUSTED YOU-- YOU SEE, I AM NOT-AHH-LIKE OTHER MEN, I DON'T BELIEVE MY BLOOD IS NORMAL...

YOU ARE SORRY? SORRY? YOU ARE CERTAINLY A DIFFERENT KIND OF MAN THAN ANY I HAVE KNOWN...
I DO NOT HAVE A NAME-- WOULD YOU GIVE ME A NAME --I WOULD BE HONORED!
AH--WHAT MAY I CALL YOU?
I CANNOT THINK OF A NAME THAT ALREADY EXISTS THAT WOULD DO YOU JUSTICE-- PERHAPS YOU WOULD NOT MIND IF I MAKE ONE UP OUT OF MY HEAD TO SUIT YOU? --LET ME THINK--

...PERHAPS, BECAUSE HE IS AN IDIOT, THEY ARE ALLOWED TO ***LOVE***--AS ***SHE*** HAS NEVER ***LOVED***--

--AND AS ***HE*** HAS NEVER ***LOVED***...

...POOR BEFUDDLED CREATURE--INNOCENT INHUMAN-- HE KNOWS NOT WHAT ***EVIL*** IS IN THIS GIRL'S HEART-- YET--YET PERHAPS THAT IS THE ***REASON*** WHY THIS MYSHKIN-IDIOT CUTS ***THROUGH*** THE EVIL AND ***INTO*** THE REMAINING ***GOODNESS WITHIN*** THIS ***GIRL***...

...I... CANNOT THINK OF A NEW NAME FOR YOU --BUT I HAVE AN APPROPIATE NAME-- DAMON--
--YES-- I KNOW THE STORY OF DAMON AND THE LIONS.'--
...YOU RESEMBLE A DEMON... BUT DAMON IS A MAN'S NAME-- IN THE BIBLE HE WAS A MAN OF POWER--AN OUTCAST LIKE YOU--
--YES--
...YOU LIKE THE NAME?

A BAT.!
--HE CAN TAKE THE GUISE OF A BAT? HIS POWERS ARE STRANGE AND WONDROUS...
IT IS DRACULA --GONE OUT FOR A NIGHT'S FEASTING--
STRANGE, YES - BUT NOT WONDROUS, DAMON -- WONDROUS DENOTES SOMETHING GOOD-- AND WHATEVER DRACULA TOLD YOU ABOUT VAMPIRISM WAS PROBABLY INCOMPLETE...
INCOMPLETE? -- HOW SO?
WELL, WHAT DID HE TELL YOU VAMPIRISM WAS?
--HE SAID IT WAS A GOD-GIVEN-POWER-- GIVEN TO HIM TO THWART EVIL -- THAT BY A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY OF SUCKING BLOOD FROM THE NECK OF A VICTIM - SUCH AS YOU LEAH-- INTO A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD, WHO IN TURN HAS THE POWER TO GO ABOUT THE WORLD AND CLEANSE MEN OF EVIL --HE SAID MOST HUMANS OF THIS WORLD ARE EVIL AND THAT--
STOP-- STOP-- ENOUGH!!
HE HAS FED YOU NOTHING BUT RUBBISH-- I KNOW HE DECEIVED YOU --HE PROBABLY PLANS TO ENLIST YOUR SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OUR HIDE-OUT IS DISCOVERED...
--HE SPOKE LIES.?-- NONE OF HIS WORDS WERE TRUE.?
HE TWISTED THE TRUTH INTO KNOTS, DAMON --
IT IS NOT GOD-GIVEN --IT IS SATAN-GIVEN.! GIVEN TO THWART THE FORCES OF GOOD, NOT EVIL.! THE DRAINING OF BLOOD IS NOT A RELIGIONS CEREMONY-- IT'S A SEXUAL CEREMONY.! IT DOES NOT CLEANSE EVIL FROM THE VICTIM-- BUT TURNS HIM INTO THE SAME SORT OF FIEND AS THE VAMPIRE-- AND MOST HUMANS OF THE WORLD ARE NOT EVIL --
--MERELY STUPID AND BELIGERANT...
SO-MY PRINCESS LEAH -- YOU TURN MY FRIEND AGAINST ME WITH LOATHSOME LIES...
DRACULA!
--IT IS LEAH I CHOSE TO BELIEVE -- NOT YOU.!

...INGRATE...
HOLD, VAMPIRE!!
WHAPPP!!
YOU'VE GIVEN ME NO CAUSE TO FIGHT YOU -- UNTIL THIS MINUTE...
--YOUR LIES ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL -- I WILL IGNORE THEM...
...BUT LEAVE LEAH BE...
--OR I SWEAR --I'LL KILL YOU!
DO YOU LOVE HIM? LOOK AT ME -- LOOK INTO MY EYES LEAH -- ARE YOU NOT MY WOMAN? LOOK INTO MY EYES --
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HER -IS SHE IN A TRANCE?
LOOK INTO MY EYES -- LOOK DEEP -- NOW, ANSWER ME -- WHO DO YOU LOVE?
YOU HAVE PUT HER INTO SOME TRANCE -- WHAT SHE SAYS NOW WILL MEAN NOTHING TO ME -- SHE HAS ALREADY SPOKEN TO ME OF HER LOVE FOR ME
I LOVE YOU MASTER --ONLY YOU!
YOU CAN'T KILL ME MONSTER -- I CANNOT DIE -- FOR I AM ALREADY DEAD...
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF THE GIRL!
WHY?... ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH HER?... DON'T BE STUPID MONSTER...
...SHE LOVES NOT YOU, SHE LOVES ONLY BLOOD...
--AND AS SHE'S DISCOVERED ALREADY, THAT IS ONE THING YOU CANNOT GIVE HER!
SUNLIGHT!
THE DAWN RISES -- WHAT OF IT?
NOTHING -- NOTHING AT ALL -- I MUST SLEEP NOW--
LISTEN MY FRIEND, YOU WANT THE GIRL, I CARE NOT ABOUT OUR ARGUMENT -- TAKE HER AND GO..
--GO!

...HE IS A MADMAN -- HE IS OUT OF HIS WITS...
-- FIRST HE PLAYS GAMES -- THEN PERMITS THIS WOMAN WITHIN HIS MENTAL POWER TO LEAVE WITH ME -- WITHOUT EVEN AN ARGUMENT...
--HE IS OUT OF HIS MIND -- EITHER THAT, OR I CAN ONLY PRESUME HE DID NOT WANT TO BATTLE ME, KNOWING I WOULD INDEED KILL HIM -- DESPITE HIS STRANGE TALK OF BEING ALREADY DEAD!

LEAH IS DEAD, DRACULA -- SOMEHOW I KNOW THIS IS YOUR DOING... I KNOW NOT THE WAYS OF VAMPIRISM, BUT I KNOW -- SOMEHOW -- YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MURDERING THIS BEAUTIFUL, INNOCENT WOMAN...
...COME OUT OF YOUR CAVE AND CONFRONT ME FACE TO FACE...
...I'LL TEAR YOU LIMB FROM LIMB...

"...I KILLED THE MONSTER DRACULA, THOUGH AT THE TIME BY WHAT MEANS I COULD NOT KNOW -- I HAVE SINCE LEARNED MUCH MORE ABOUT VAMPIRISM, I LEARNED THE POWER OF THE CROSS UPON VAMPIRES, AND REALIZED THE SHADOW I CAST, HOLDING LEAH IN THE CAVE ENTRANCE, CAST THE EXACT SHADOW OF THE CROSS INTO DRACULA'S FACE...

...I WATCHED AS HE CRUMPLED TO THE FLOOR AND WITHERED TO DUST...

--- I PICKED UP THE DUST AND SCATTERED IT INTO THE AIR...

...I BURIED LEAH WITHIN THE CAVE...

...AND LEFT AS I HAD COME -- WALKING NOWHERE -- WITH NO DESTINATION...

...ALONE...

PSYCHOTIC PSYCHO EDITORIAL PAGES

The HORROR-MOOD is rather proud of the SHOGGOTH series. Many writers have adapted H. P. Lovecraft's writings into the illustrated story medium but so far-as-we-know, no writer has 'extended' the famous Lovecraft SHOGGOTH theme into new illustrated works, as many writers are doing in text stories and novels, such as Lin Carter and the late August Derleth — no one, that is, except in the HORROR - MOOD magazines where we try to make innovation a by-word! With the publication of THE SCREAM AND THE NIGHTMARE in NIGHTMARE #20 last month, we are plunging into our INTERNATIONAL HORROR - MOOD SHOGGOTH CRUSADE, an organization dedicated to ending the Shoggoth Menace — you can join this club and get a free certificate; You pledge no money, only your life.

We are giving over our usual letter/editorial space this issue of the 1974 PSYCHO SUMMER-SPECIAL to a letter from MS. BERNADETTE LYNN BOSKY of Northbrook, Illinois, and to background information on both the SHOGGOTH CRUSADE and our SHOGGOTH series.

H. P. LOVECRAFT by artist VIRGIL FINLAY

Dear Al Hewetson, editor —

A short while ago I found a copy of your magazine, NIGHTMARE #19, on the magazine rack. I had never seen it — or any of your other magazines — before. They do not carry them at home, but they do in a drugstore not far from campus. So, being a connoisseur of things macabre and grotesque I leafed through it to see what it had to offer. One article took me aback — "The Vault", volume five of the "Shoggoth Chronicles." Amazing!

And the Master, the "young man from Providence" was even mentioned in the headnote, along with his brain-child, the mad Arab, and that most abhorred of esoteric volumes, THE NECRONOMICON! I purchased the magazine, of course, to peruse at my leisure.

It was, indeed, quite a find for me. I fancy myself quite a fan and scholar of H. P. Lovecraft, and have been since I first picked up THE DUNWICH HORROR AND OTHERS my freshman year in high school. Since then I have given a number of lectures on Lovecraft and the Cthulhu mythos (mostly to high school students, one at a junior college) and have taught a week-long unit on his works, using "The Dunwich Horror" and LaVey's Cthulhuoid "Satanic Rituals" as the text, in cooperation with a Supernatural in Literature English class.

This is, however, not a brag but a praise. Because, although I have an extensive collection of Lovecraftiana I have noticed an interesting lack of same in the big, black and white horror magazines. Marvel adapted some of the works in their comic mags, and one story in one of the Warren publications used Hastur and Cthulhu, but in the whole this rich field has been vastly ignored. I salute you.

However (there is always one of them, isn't there,) one thing bothered me. Shoggoths, as expressed in Lovecraft's works, vary greatly from those of your publication. "The Mountain of Madness" is, I think, the main mention of them, as one part of your story hinted. Turning to that novel, (Arkham house edition, 1964) we find the following descriptions of Shoggoths: ". . . multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sort of temporary organs under hypnotic influence . . ." (p. 58) " . . . viscous masses . . ." (same page) " . . . fetid . . . mountain of slime-spewing protoplasm . . ." (p. 92) and finally ". . . Formless protoplasm able to mock and glutinations of bubbling cells — rubbery fifteen-foot sphereoids infinitely plastic and ductile — slaves of suggestion . . ." (p. 89)

Now, it is clear that these amorphous servants of the Old Ones are quite different from those Shoggoths of your publication. Still, many points were gratifing to a fan of E'ch P-iel, as he has been called. The mention of the NECRONOMICON, for one thing. Though I think just about everything has been mentioned as being in that tome (Alhazred wasn't killed by the Great Old Ones, he died of Exhaustion trying to write the thing). The Shoggoths are given special mention; in fact, that Alhazred dared not refer to them except as the dreams of people who had chewed certain Alkaline herbs. Also the city (although it looked less like Cyclopean Basalt and more like Mexican Adobe)was great, the mention of the Mountains of Madness, and of course the TEKELI*LI!

Profile
To R. H. Barlow, Esq., whose Sculpture has given immortality to this trivial Design of his abhorrent Servant
H. P. Lovecraft
11 May, 1934

Lovecraft's illustration of CTHULHU inspired Zesar's interpretation of the SHOGGOTH.

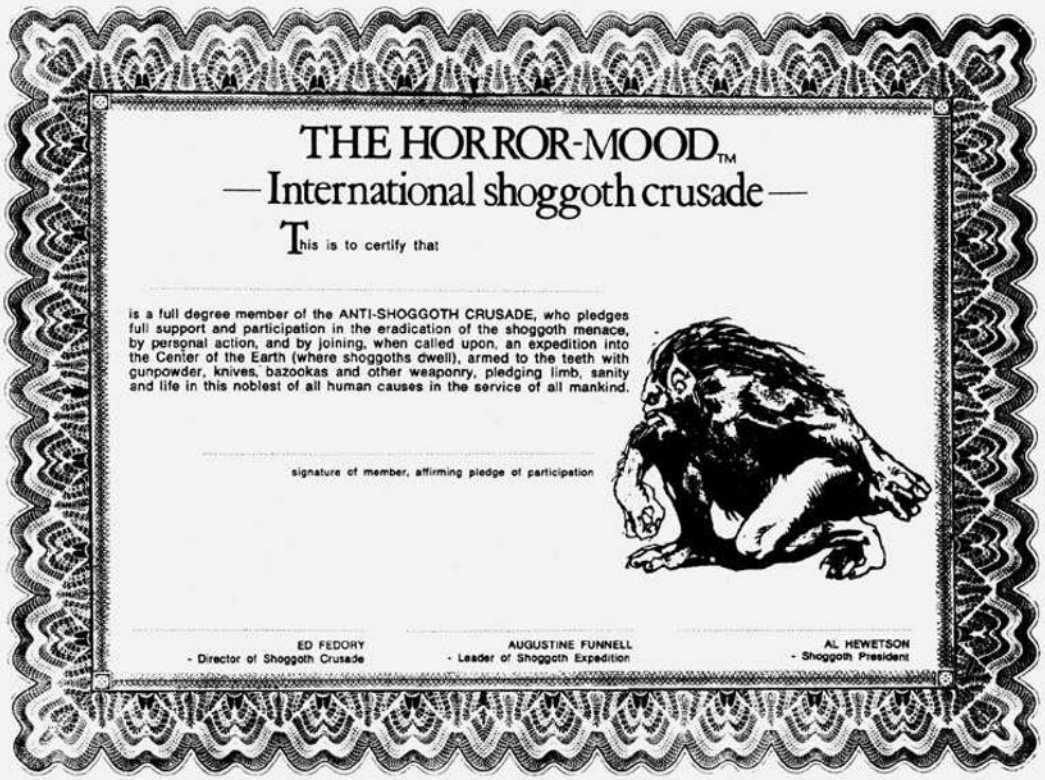
Therefore, on balance my enjoyment was great, and my argument sparked more by that strange, nit-picking instinct of teachers and librarians (though I am neither, I hope to be the former.) I can appreciate your necessity, also: it would, indeed, be difficult to illustrate an entire series featuring what Brian Lumley said was ". . . iridescent, blackly shining column of what looked like tar embedded with fragments of broked, multicolored glass . . ." (THE BURROWERS BENEATH, p. 119). Practical considerations alone demand that the Thing have a shape.

And the shape taken was not a bad one. May I be presumptuous enough — I found it strangely reminiscent of another figure in HPL, the ghoul. I refer especially to the compatriots and — finally — peers of Richard Upton Pickman. In the story "PICKMAN'S MODEL" (THE DUNWHICH HORROR AND OTHERS, Arkham House, 1963) they are described as:

> **". . . roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast . . ." (p. 25) ". . . squatting on the chest of sleepers . . ." and ". . . Baying about a hanged witch . . ." (p. 26) ". . . FACES that leered and slavered . . ." (same page).**

In THE DREAM QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH Pickman becomes a Ghoul himself, and the scenes of the Shoggoths squatting among the tombstones was very reminiscent of a similar scene in KADATH. Of course, there is no suggestion of any eating, just burying, in your story! and, too, Shoggoth sounds better than Ghoul, having the advantage of more novelty and a lack of human associations, and connections with those merely insane.

Your presentation is good, and ever-so Lovecraftian—the first person presentation as fact, etc. (Unless, it really IS . . .) The idea of using the editor and artist even better, an interesting twist on the curious and boring little fellows who usually introduce stories in other magazines, but this time real people, part of the story. (Impertinent aside: If you two really look like that, you are two dudes I would not mind meeting!)


THE HORROR-MOOD™
— International shoggoth crusade —
This is to certify that
is a full degree member of the ANTI-SHOGGOTH CRUSADE, who pledges full support and participation in the eradication of the shoggoth menace, by personal action, and by joining, when called upon, an expedition into the Center of the Earth (where shoggoths dwell), armed to the teeth with gunpowder, knives, bazookas and other weaponry, pledging limb, sanity and life in this noblest of all human causes in the service of all mankind.
signature of member, affirming pledge of participation
ED FEDORY
- Director of Shoggoth Crusade
AUGUSTINE FUNNELL
- Leader of Shoggoth Expedition
AL HEWETSON
- Shoggoth President

. . . Reproductions used in this feature are courtesy of ARKHAM HOUSE PUBLISHING, and are printed here for purposes of a literary review of H. P. Lovecraft . . .

Thank you very much for your indulgence in this overly-long letter. I am sure that both you and the artist are aware of all of this. Call it perhaps, the effervescence of one enthusiastic HPL fan when she "meets" another.

I remain,

yours very truly,

Ms. Bernadette Lynn Bosky

. . . Ms. Bosky's letter was received with great enthusiasm, for indeed it is a pleasure to receive correspondence from one so clearly fanatical about the weird works of Lovecraft as we are . . .

. . . The complete SHOGGOTH series is outlined herewith for everyone's HORROR - MOOD checklist . . .

. . . In her letter, Bernadette expresses interest in our formulation of the SHOGGOTH'S appearance. She is quite right in suggesting: ". . . Practical considerations alone demand that the thing have a shape . . .", but when we planned the shape we wanted to be as close to a Lovecraft concept as possible, so artist Zesar based the grotesquery upon a sketch by Lovecraft himself of CTHULHU, reproduced here which we dug up when we visited the LOVECRAFT COLLECTION at the BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, built on the very grounds (66 College Street) where Lovecraft was born, in Providence, Rhode Island . . .

. . . Everyone is invited to join the CRUSADE, free of any charge, however this is certainly the last opportunity you will have to join — we will not accept any requests for membership diplomas after October 15, 1974. To join, send 15¢ for necessary postage and handling to: HORROR - MOOD SHOGGOTH CRUSADE, Skywald Publishing Corporation, 18 East 41st Street, Room 1501, New York City, N.Y. 10017. Your certificate will be personally, individually, autographed by Archaic Al, Emotionally - Disturbed Ed, and Awkward Augustine . . .

. . . THE SHOGGOTH CHRONICLES, and THE SHOGGOTH CRUSADE, are just 2 good reasons to stay tuned in to PSYCHO, NIGHTMARE, and SCREAM . . .

R.I.P. ARCHAIC AL

DUDES WORTH MEETING

artist ZESAR

artist CARDONA

writer HEWETSON

THE SKULL FOREST OF OLD EARTH: illustrated by Zesar-NIGHTMARE #9
WHERE ARE THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH?: illustrated by Zesar-NIGHTMARE #11
THIS GROTESQUE GREEN EARTH: illustrated by Zesar-NIGHTMARE #15
THIS ARCHAIC BURIAL GROUND-illustrated by GUAL-SCREAM #1
THE VAULT-illustrated by CARDONA-NIGHTMARE #19
THE SCREAM AND THE NIGHTMARE-illustrated by Cardona-NIGHTMARE #20
— coming up in the SHOGGOTH series, yet to be published, by artist Zesar:
THE MOUNTAIN OF GRAVES and UNDER THE GROUND IS HELL —
These stories were all written for the HORROR-MOOD by Alan Hewetson

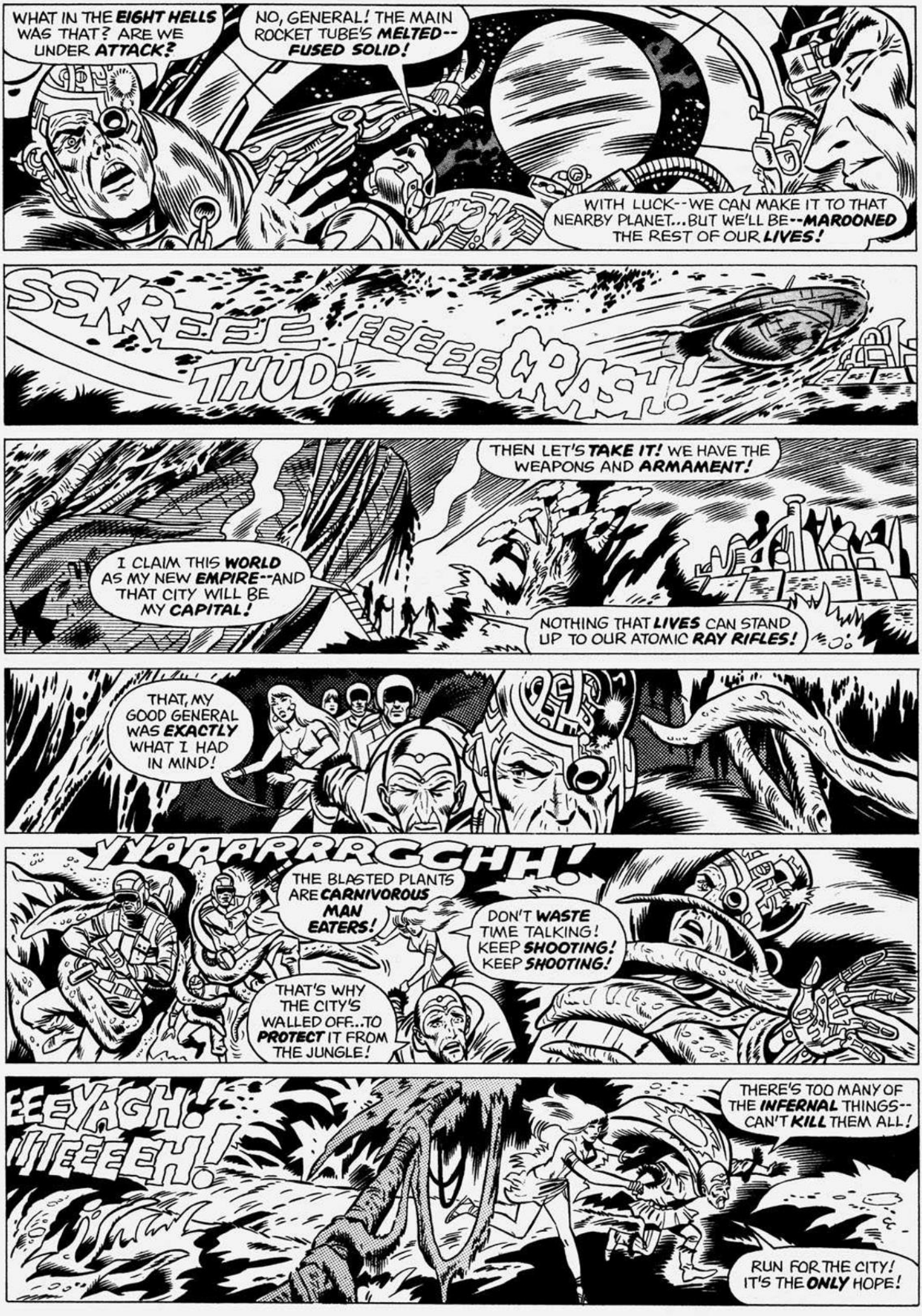
AAAHHHHHHHEE HEE HEE!
THESE GAMES PROVIDE SUCH EXQUISITE SPORT! A SHAME WE'VE JUST WITNESSED THE LAST EVENT OF THE DAY...
THIS IS THE PLANET SADE...IT IS A HARSH WORLD...FRAUGHT WITH SAVAGERY...BLOOD...AND DEATH!
REVOLUTION!
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY TOM SUTTON AND DAN ADKINS
BUT NO MATTER! GENERAL MORRO... SUMMON THE REST OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD!
YES, EXCELLENCY--AS YOU COMMAND!
I WISH TO RETURN TO THE PALACE--BEFORE I AM OVERCOME BY THE HEAT AND NOISOME STENCH OF THE ARENA!
SIRE--SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT CONTENT WITH YOUR RULE! THEY SPEAK OF REVOLUTION!
MY MEN HAVE MANAGED TO EXECUTE MOST OF THE CONSPIRATORS... BUT THE SITUATION REMAINS TENSE --EXTREMELY TENSE!
MORRO, YOU INSUFFERABLE INCOMPETENT--DON'T BOTHER ME WITH TRIFLES!
GET THEIR ATTENTION ON SOMETHING ELSE! DISTRACT THE PEOPLE WITH MORE GAMES!
I DON'T CARE IF YOU MUST PILLAGE AND PLUNDER HALF THE PLANETS IN THE GALAXY--
I WANT MORE SLAVES FOR THE GAMES!
MORE SLAVES DO YOU HEAR ME? MORE SLAVES!
AS YOU WISH, SUPREME ONE!
PLANET AFTER PLANET FALLS BEFORE GENERAL MORRO'S INDOMITABLE MIGHT...
TTTAKK-FROOM!
RETREAT! RETREAT! THE INVADERS ARE EVERYWHERE!
GET UP THE RAMP! MOVE, YOU SPINELESS DOGS--OR FEEL THE SHARP BITE OF MY NEURONIC WHIP!
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE HERE--NOT WITH OTHER WORLDS RIPE FOR SLAUGHTER--WAITING TO BE CONQUERED!

WITH A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SUPPLY OF SLAVES THE BARBARIC GAMES CONTINUE...
THE CROWD IS A LARGE ONE, YOUR MAJESTY! THE GAMES ARE AS POPULAR AS EVER!
YET STILL I'M TOLD THE PEOPLE AREN'T SATISFIED!
WE MUST INSTILL A SENSE OF NOVELTY IN THE GAMES-- MAKE THEM MORE ENTERTAINING!
I WANT EVERYONE TO RESPECT ME-- PAY HOMAGE TO ME-- CONSIDER ME A BENEVOLENT RULER!
THE GAMES ARE BEING HELD EVERY DAY--AND THE HORRIBLE TORMENT...
SSS
AAARGH
...THE UNABASHED TORTURE...
...AND THE GRISLY DEATH GOES ON UNABATED!
PLEASE DON'T LET ME DIE LIKE THIS!

THE KING IS A GOOD PROVIDER! NOT ONLY ARE THE GAMES FREE-- THEY'RE BETTER THAN EVER!
IT'S ALL A TRICK!
THE KING FORCES US TO LIVE LIKE ANIMALS-- AND TREATS US LIKE DOGS AS WELL!
YOU'RE SPEAKING TREASON, BOY!
AND THE REWARD FOR TREASON IS DEATH!
TTZZZK!
HE WAS BUT A BOY-- AND THE IMPERIAL GUARDS SLEW HIM!
HE WAS RIGHT! THE KING DOES TREAT US LIKE DOGS--BUT NO LONGER!
DEATH TO THE KING!
LET US FIGHT AS ONLY FREE MEN CAN!
GET BACK YOU WITLESS DOLTS-- OR I'LL FIRE--
BOOM
THE CITIZENS ARE ATTACKING THE NORTH GATE!
THE REVOLUTION MUST BE CRUSHED BEFORE IT GETS OUT OF HAND!
GIVE NO QUARTER! KILL EVERYONE!
SOLDIERS ARE COMING--WITH GUNS AND TANKS! WE ARE DOOMED!
NO! THERE'S STILL A CHANCE!
THE DOOR TO THE ANIMAL PENS-- OPEN IT!

THE ANIMALS ARE LOOSE ...RUNNING RAMPANT!
ALL UNITS OPEN FIRE!
TOO LATE! THEY'RE STARTING TO CHARGE!
HISSSSSS
FALL BACK!
OUR BEAM BOLTS ARE USELESS! NOTHING CAN STOP THEM!
TZZZZK!
DISPATCH TO GENERAL MORRO: HALF THE IMPERIAL GUARDS WIPED OUT. SITUATION CRITICAL. SUGGEST YOU TAKE EVERY MEASURE TO PROTECT HIS EXCELLENCY. --TASK FORCE LEADER IMPERIAL GUARD.
YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE TO BLAST OFF BEFORE THE MOB ATTACKS THE SPACE FORT!
DON'T BELABOR THE OBVIOUS, MORRO! I KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE!

WITH A MUFFLED ROAR THE KING AND HIS ROYAL STAFF ESCAPE THE COLLECTIVE WRATH OF THE CITIZENS OF SLADE...
BRRR


WHAT IN THE EIGHT HELLS WAS THAT? ARE WE UNDER ATTACK?
NO, GENERAL! THE MAIN ROCKET TUBE'S MELTED--FUSED SOLID!
WITH LUCK--WE CAN MAKE IT TO THAT NEARBY PLANET...BUT WE'LL BE--MAROONED THE REST OF OUR LIVES!
SSKREEE
THUD!
EEEEE
CRASH!
THEN LET'S TAKE IT! WE HAVE THE WEAPONS AND ARMAMENT!
I CLAIM THIS WORLD AS MY NEW EMPIRE--AND THAT CITY WILL BE MY CAPITAL!
NOTHING THAT LIVES CAN STAND UP TO OUR ATOMIC RAY RIFLES!
THAT, MY GOOD GENERAL WAS EXACTLY WHAT I HAD IN MIND!
YYAAARRRGGHH!
THE BLASTED PLANTS ARE CARNIVOROUS MAN EATERS!
DON'T WASTE TIME TALKING! KEEP SHOOTING! KEEP SHOOTING!
THAT'S WHY THE CITY'S WALLED OFF...TO PROTECT IT FROM THE JUNGLE!
EEEYAGH!
IIIEEEEH!
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THE INFERNAL THINGS--CAN'T KILL THEM ALL!
RUN FOR THE CITY! IT'S THE ONLY HOPE!

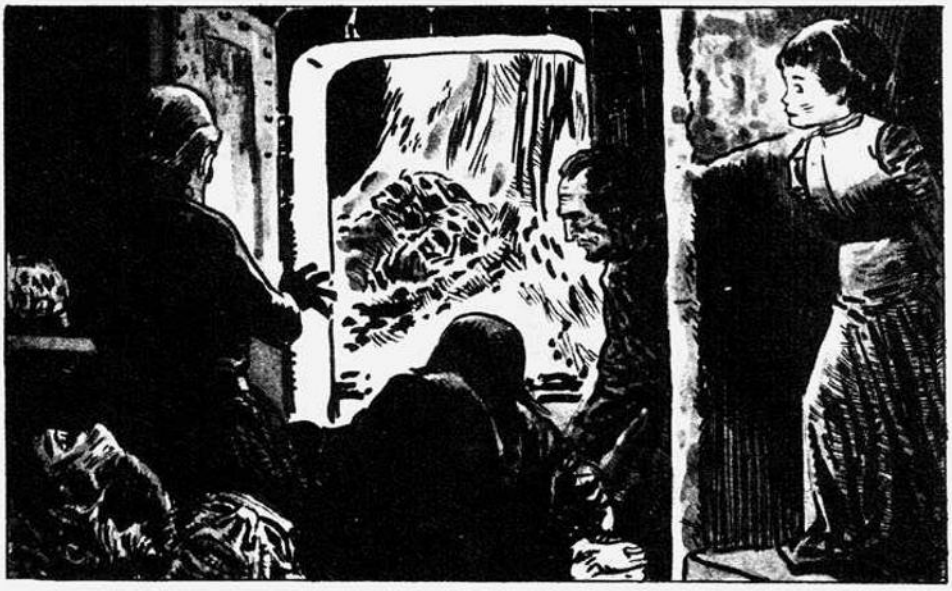
THE FORTIFIED CITY LIES STRAIGHT AHEAD--ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT SMALL RIVER!
AND ONE FINAL PLANT BARS MY PATH TO SAFETY!
BUT I CAN'T LET THAT STOP ME NOW--
NOOOO
...AND I WON'T!
SKKRUNCH!
RATHER YOU MY LOVELY LITTLE PRINCESS THAN ME!
I'M THE LAST ONE! MY DREAMS OF POWER-- MY DREAMS OF GLORY... GONE FOREVER!
YET, I STILL RETAIN THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL--MY LIFE!
WAIT! SOMETHING'S SNAKING ABOUT MY ANKLE, GRABBING ME, PULLING ME UNDER THE SURFACE--
WHA
MAN CANNOT ESCAPE HIS FATE! IT IS ALWAYS THERE--
INEXORIBLE, ALL POWERFUL... AND WAITING IN...
THE END

TONIGHT – AARON PARIGEE WOULD NOT DREAM HIS CURSE OF THE DAMNED! HE WOULD NOT STAND AT THE MOUTH OF A HELL, PEOPLED WITH VILE, RANCID, LOATHSOME THINGS SPAWNED IN THE DARK RILLS OF A TORMENTED MEMORY!!
NO.. NOT TONIGHT.. FOR THIS DAY HE HAD KEPT...
THE VOW!
Boyette
BUT, EVEN IN THE MOMENT OF TRIUMPH, AARON'S TORTURED BODY TREMBLED FROM A FAMILIAR, CHILLING SPASM THAT SEEMED TO ERUPT FROM THE ICY PULP OF HIS OWN MARROW .. AND HIS THOUGHTS RACED BACK TO THAT DAY SO LONG AGO WHEN HIS WIFE LAY DYING.. A VICTIM OF THE PLAGUE....
OH, MY DEAR MADALAYNE... DO NOT FRET FOR THE CHILD.. SHE WILL PREVAIL.. AND I WILL GIVE HER EVERYTHING HER HEART SHOULD DESIRE! THIS MY VOW TO YOU!
SIRE.. YOUR WIFE IS DEAD.. AND I MUST LEAVE... THERE ARE MANY TO ATTEND...
YES.. 'MANY TO ATTEND'... FOR THE HOMES, THE STREETS – PERHAPS THE WHOLE WORLD WAS BEING SMOTHERED BY THE SWEET STENCH OF DEATH!
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY PAT BOYETTE
AND THERE WAS ALSO THE LIVING DEAD WHO DEFILED THE NIGHTS WITH THEIR PUTRID BODIES, THEIR ANGRY OATHS, AND THEIR VENGEFUL FIRES!
BURN
KILL KILL
BURN

ONLY THE CERTAIN HAND OF FATE LED AARON AND HIS DAUGHTER TO A PLACE OF SAFETY!
DEATH TO THE ARISTOCRATIC DEVILS... BURN THE DOGS!
THE FILTH.. THEY'RE BURNING OUR HOME!
FURTHER GOOD FORTUNE DIRECTED AARON TO THE DOOR OF HIS OLD FRIEND-THE PREFECT OF POLICE....
HELP YOU? MY GOD, MAN... I CAN'T EVEN HELP MYSELF!
THE INSURGENTS ..THE DISEASE.. WE WILL ALL DIE!
WAIT!..THERE IS ONE THING..I NEED A MAN TO OVERSEE DISPOSAL OF THE CORPSES! WE MUST AT LEAST PRETEND AT CIVILIZATION!
YES..I WILL DO IT! AND- THERE IS A HOUSE AT THE CREMATORIUM .. WE CAN STAY THERE!
AND SO IT BEGAN ..THAT GRISLY TASK! BUT AARON AND HIS DAUGHTER WERE SAFE IN THEIR FORTRESS OF DESPAIR!
AND THERE WERE EVEN REWARDS MANY OF THE CADAVERS CARRIED VALUABLES!
THE DEVIL WILL NOT GET EVERYTHING.. NO.. WE SHALL BE PAID FOR THIS LEPEROUS WORK... WE SHARE ALIKE!
OTHER THAN OURSELVES.. THERE ARE FEW WITH COURAGE TO TOUCH THE DEAD.. EVEN TO TAKE THEIR TREASURE!

THROUGH THE NIGHTS OF TERROR, AARON PARIGEE'S LEGION ROAMED WITH IMMUNITY TO DISEASE AND REVOLUTION... COLLECTING THE HUMAN REFUGE THAT LITTERED THE STREETS AND DOORWAYS...
AND FROM THE CREMATORIUM BELCHED CONSTANT CLOUDS OF ACRID SMOKE..

AARON SET ABOUT HIS WORK WITH A FURY THAT MADE HIM OBLIVIOUS TO HIS SURROUNDINGS—EVEN TO THE WIDE LITTLE EYES-TRANSFIXED ON THE MORBID ACTIVITY...



HIS LITTLE DAUGHTER CASSANDRA WAS AARON'S ONLY JOY.. AND HER WARMTH SEEMED TO SOFTEN THE DEEP TRENCHES OF STRAIN THAT SLASHED HIS FACE...

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED .. THERE WAS NEVER A SHORTAGE OF CLIENTS .. THE PLAGUE WAS REPLACED BY THE GUILLOTINE! A JADED AARON PARIGEE NO LONGER RETCHED AT THE ODOR OF HIS NECROPOLIS! THE LOOK OF THE DEAD WAS SO COMMONPLACE THAT HE CEASED TO SEE IT...
HOWEVER, THE HORRORS OF HIS WORLD WERE NONE-THE-LESS REAL, AND A SINGLE EXPERIENCE SERVED TO JOLT HIS AWARENESS...
CASSANDRA! CASSANDRA, WHERE ARE YOU GIRL?
I'M UP HERE FATHER!
.. AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE ATTIC?
.. I'M VISITING WITH MY FRIEND!
FRIEND? YOU HAVE NO...
.. FRIEND!
THIS IS MIMI!

NAUSEA AND GUILT STABBED AT AARON'S SOUL AS HE RETREATED FROM THE REPULSIVE SCENE...
I'VE FAILED MY DAUGHTER IN A MOST HORRIBLE WAY ...I VOWED TO BRING HER HAPPINESS.. BUT.. BUT... I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT UP TO HER!

IN DESPERATION, AARON SHOWERED CASSANDRA WITH GIFTS, BUT LIKE MOST FATHERS, HE FAILED TO NOTICE THAT SHE COULD NO LONGER BE INTERESTED IN CHILDISH BAUBLES.. FOR RECENTLY THERE WAS A DIFFERENT LIGHT IN HER EYES...
LISTEN.. A MUSIC BOX!
YES... THANK YOU!

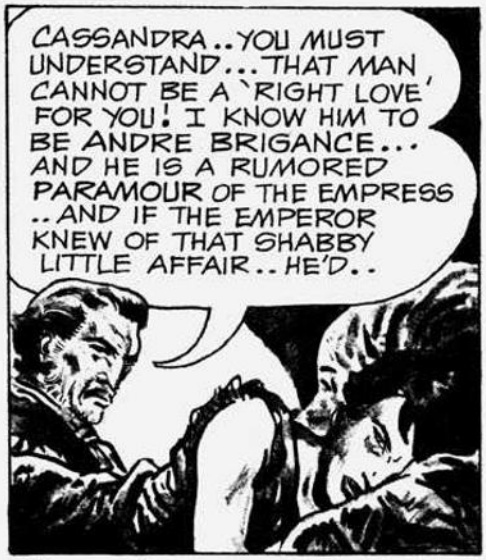
THEN.. ONE NIGHT, QUITE BY ACCIDENT.. HE GLIMPSED A FAMILIAR FIGURE AS IT SWEPT ACROSS THE COURTYARD!
CASSANDRA.... WHERE...

AND SO AARON RECEIVED STILL ANOTHER SURPRISE.. HIS BRAIN EXPLODED.. HIS SENSES REELED..

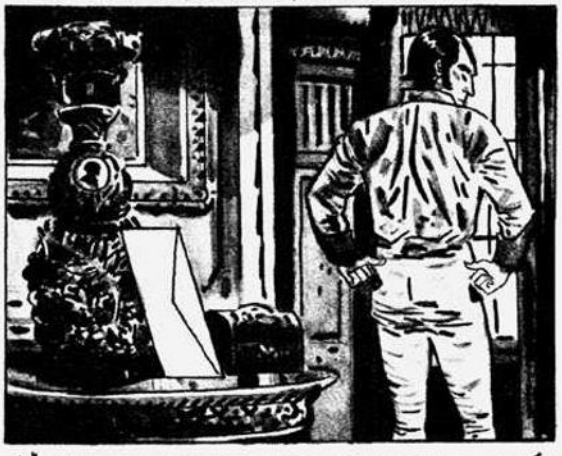
.. BUT NOW HE COULD ACT IN A MOST POSITIVE WAY AGAINST THIS NEW MENACE TO HIS DAUGHTER!
ENOUGH.. YOU MINCING DANDY!

IF YOU TOUCH MY CHILD AGAIN.. I'LL FEED YOU TO MY FIRES! I KNOW YOUR FACE.. I KNOW WHERE TO FIND YOU!

CASSANDRA LAPSED INTO DEEP DESPAIR..AND IN SORROW SHE BEGAN TO WASTE AWAY...


CASSANDRA..YOU MUST UNDERSTAND...THAT MAN CANNOT BE A 'RIGHT LOVE' FOR YOU! I KNOW HIM TO BE ANDRE BRIGANCE... AND HE IS A RUMORED PARAMOUR OF THE EMPRESS ..AND IF THE EMPEROR KNEW OF THAT SHABBY LITTLE AFFAIR..HE'D..

SO..IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THAT AN UNSIGNED LETTER APPEARED IN THE EMPEROR'S QUARTERS...



THOSE IN AUTHORITY SAID THE NOTE OF INDICTMENT THREW THE EMPEROR INTO A FROTHING RAGE..

..AND ALTHOUGH BRIGANCE MAY HAVE BEEN A GREAT LOVER..HE WAS A PITIFULLY POOR LIAR...

NOW..WE COME TO THIS NIGHT AND AARON PARIGEE'S COMFORT IN HAVING BROUGHT JOY TO HIS DAUGHTER'S ACHING HEART..

THE COMPETENT UNION OF A SCARLET LETTER, CUPID, AND LA BELLE GUILLOTINE HAD DELIVERED THE GROOM..AND EVEN NOW A LOVING CASSANDRA IS BUSY...

...AND SO STARTS OUR TALE...

...WITH A ***PREMATURE LOOK*** AT THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE NEXT DAY'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER...WHICH ***READS:***

– from THE WINCHESTER DAILY CITIZEN

GOETHE – Frank and Vanessa are pleased to announce the birth of seven sons, Edgar, Harold, Joseph, Peter, Steven, Vincent and Wallace, and of four daughters, Annabel, Anthia, Gloria and Ramona, 4 pounds in total, on February 29, 1972, at the Winchester Memorial Hospital. All well, and our sincere thanks to Dr. Grum-Whyte, for delivering our first-born.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

WRITTEN BY ALAN HEWETSON

ILLUSTRATED BY RAMON TORRENTS

IT ***RAINS*** OUTSIDE THE WINCHESTER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL... RAINS IN A ***TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR*** THAT THREATENS TO ***DROWN*** THE SMALL SEA-PORT VILLAGE OFF THE COAST OF ***CAPE COD*** -- FRANK GOETHE ***CARES NOT*** ABOUT THIS ***RAIN***... HE HAS OTHER, ***MORE IMPORTANT THINGS*** TO CONCERN HIMSELF WITH AT THE ***MOMENT***... LIKE A ***PREGNANT WIFE*** ABOUT TO ***GIVE BIRTH*** AT ANY SECOND...

HOSPITAL

RAMON TORRENTS.72

DOCTOR... DOCTOR... IT'S ***TIME!***

QUICKLY THEN... THE OPERATION ROOM IS ***CLEARED AND WAITING*** FOR YOUR WIFE!

HAVE ALL THE ***PREPARATIONS*** BEEN MADE?

CERTAINLY... THIS IS AS IMPORTANT A BIRTH TO ***ME*** AS IT IS TO ***YOU!***

I WOULDN'T ***DREAM*** OF TAKING ANY ***CHANCES... OF COURSE*** EVERYTHING IS READY!

FRANK--YOU'VE ***ALREADY*** DONE ALL YOU ***CAN***... GO OVER TO THE ***VALLEY PUB*** AND HAVE ***A DRINK***...

...I'LL SEND SOMEONE OVER WHEN YOUR WIFE ***DELIVERS***...

I CAN JUST SIT HERE FOR HOURS GETTING DRUNKER AND DRUNKER...
...WHAT'S THE POINT? IF I CAN'T BE OF USE AT THE HOSPITAL I MAY AS WELL JUST SIT HERE AND DRINK!

NO... THAT'S NOT RIGHT... WHEN VANESSA IS READY TO DELIVER SHE'LL NEED ME WITH HER...
...WHAT GOOD WILL I BE TO HER IF I'M IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR!
I'LL WALK...
...SO IT'S A BAD NIGHT -- NOT TO ME IT ISN'T -- TO ME THE RAIN IS SYMBOLIC...

CLEANSING THE WORLD FOR THE ARRIVAL OF MY FIRST BORN --
-- I WONDER HOW VANESSA IS DOING -- IS SHE IN PAIN? IS THE DELIVERY GIVING HER ANY TROUBLE?

I PRAY TO GOD IT ISN'T... WE'D LIKE A LOT OF CHILDREN... IF THIS BIRTH GOES WELL THERE WILL BE OTHERS!
...OTHER RAINY NIGHTS WHEN I CAN JUST LET MY MIND WANDER AND DREAM OF THE FUTURE!

AND REMEMBER THE PAST... HOW WE MET... JUST A FEW MILES FROM HERE...
... I, THE SAILOR, ON SHORE-LEAVE FOR A FEW HOURS IN NANSACH HARBOR...
SHE, THE BEAUTIFUL, SWEET GIRL I FOUND AS I CHOSE TO SPEND MY TIME WALKING...
I'LL NEVER FORGET HER FACE THAT FIRST DAY... ALMOST FRIGHTENED AS I CAME UPON HER SWIMMING... IN THE NUDE...
... HA HAH... I'LL NEVER FORGET... NEVER...
... AND FROM THAT DAY ON... THANK GOD... SHE WAS MINE... MY WOMAN...
RAMÓN TORRENTS 72

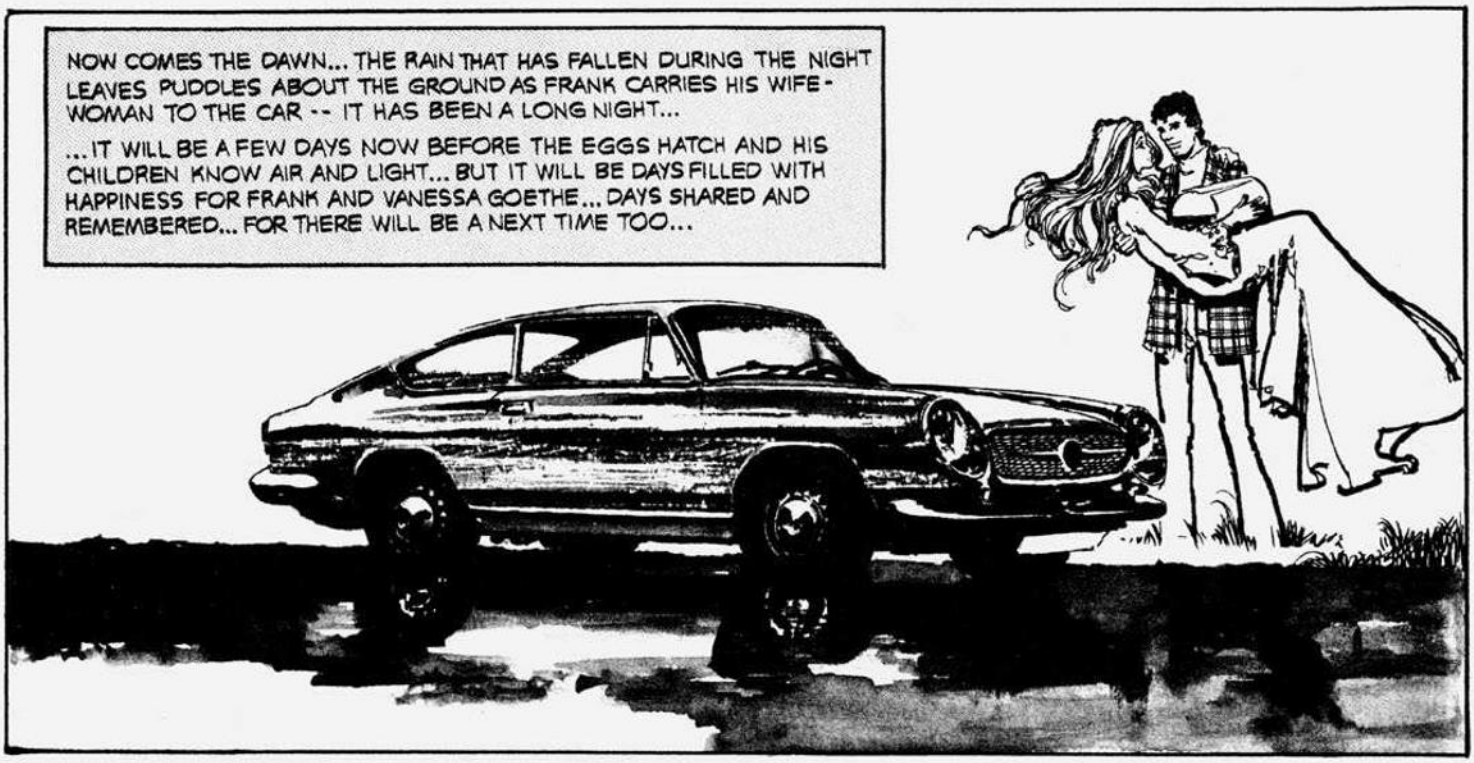
BETTER BE GETTING BACK... IT'S BEEN HOURS...
...DR. GRUM-WHYTE MUST BE WONDERING WHERE I GOT TO!

DOCTOR I...
JUST IN TIME FRANK... CONGRATULATIONS...
...YOU'RE NOW A PROUD FATHER... COME AND SEE THE LITTLE ONES AND YOUR WIFE... THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU IN THE RECOVERY ROOM...

HELLO LOVE... EVERYTHING ALRIGHT?
YES FRANK DEAR... EVERYTHING WENT WELL... DID YOU SEE YOUR YOUNG ONES YET?
NO... WHERE?...
HERE THEY ARE!

IN A BASKET?
...IT'S NOT JUST A BASKET... IT'S A SPECIAL INCUBATOR... KEEPS THEM WARM UNTIL THEY CAN GET HOME...
...YOU'RE WIFE IS READY TO GO HOME ALREADY -- IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES SHE'LL BE DRESSED...

THANK YOU DOCTOR... WE APPRECIATE ALL YOU'VE DONE...
...NOT AT ALL MY BOY... IT'S BEEN MY PLEASURE -- MY DISTINCT HONOR AND PRIVILAGE TO HAVE MADE THIS DELIVERY...
...I HOPE ALL GOES WELL AT HOME -- IF THERE IS ANYTHING FURTHER I CAN DO I'LL BE ONLY TOO HAPPY... AND REST ASSURED THAT THE HOSPITAL STAFF WON'T TELL A SOUL...
HOW DO YOU FEEL VANESSA?
JUST FINE DOCTOR...
...FINE AND PROUD!
RAMÓN TORRENTS. 72


NOW COMES THE DAWN... THE RAIN THAT HAS FALLEN DURING THE NIGHT LEAVES PUDDLES ABOUT THE GROUND AS FRANK CARRIES HIS WIFE-WOMAN TO THE CAR -- IT HAS BEEN A LONG NIGHT...
...IT WILL BE A FEW DAYS NOW BEFORE THE EGGS HATCH AND HIS CHILDREN KNOW AIR AND LIGHT... BUT IT WILL BE DAYS FILLED WITH HAPPINESS FOR FRANK AND VANESSA GOETHE... DAYS SHARED AND REMEMBERED... FOR THERE WILL BE A NEXT TIME TOO...

PHANTOM OF THE ROCK ERA

WRITTEN BY CHARLES McNAUGHTON ILLUSTRATED BY RALPH REESE

THIS EVENING STAR, THEY KNEW, WOULD SOON ECLIPSE ALL OTHER ROCK SUPER-STARS. HE WAS MAGNETISM... AN ANIMAL FURY MATCHED WITH A COMPELLING AURA OF EVIL AND SELF-DESTRUCTION AND AN ANTI-SEXUALITY WHICH HIP GIRLS FOUND ALLURING.
MY LOVE IS LIKE A BLOOD RED ROSE, WILTING IN THE GARDEN...
SOON SHE WILL BE JUST LIKE ME... THEN WILL BE OUR WEDDING!
THE CROWD AT COWBOY BOB'S BAR AND DISCO STARED ON, JOYFULLY AGHAST: WITNESSING A PHENOMENON! THE DEBUT OF A NEW ROCK TALENT... A PERSONALITY TO MESMERIZE THEM WITH HIS EMPTY, WAILING VOICE, HAUNTED LYRICS, POSSESSED MOVEMENTS...
RODDY SKERNE

HIS MUSIC FRENZIED THEM... SET THEM WILD! EACH GIRL GYRATED AS IF BEING HELD BY A DEMON... LOST IN GROTESQUE ECSTACY! ALL, BUT ONE...
LALA LOVE, THIS ONE IS YOUR MARK!

...AND COLLECT A FORTUNE IN ALIMONY WHEN HE'S FAMOUS!
THE RENT-A-COP TOLD ME HE'S HIS OWN MANAGER, SO, OPEN SEASON!
ROOM
THE DRESSING ROOM WAS CRAMPED AND MUSKY. WITH A SHRUG OF SELF-PITY THE EXOTIC FIGURE TURNED TO HER...
RODDY SKEANE?
I JUST SAW YOUR PERF! HEAVY! YOU WERE JUST...
WHAT DO YOU WANT, LITTLE GIRL, MY MONEY OR MY LIFE?
HE'S ON TO ME! SLOW AND EASY, NOW... PLAY "HURT..."
I... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR...
Y... YOU DON'T WANT ME HERE?
WAIT! DON'T GO! I... I'M SORRY FOR BEING RUDE!
THE "PITY THE POOR MONSTER" BIT... SUCH CLICHE!
HIS EYES! SO DEAD... DARK... DISTANT... AS IF...
I'VE BEEN WAITING SO LONG FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU TO WALK IN...
A GNARLED, SKELETAL HAND REACHED FORTH AND BEGAN TO STROKE LALA'S HAIR, SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY...
HIS SKIN... SO PALE... SO TAUGHT... AND ODOROUS... LIKE DEATH!
HE... HE'S HYPNOTIZING ME! I'M FALLING UNDER HIS SPELL!
YOU REALLY WANT ME? OF ALL PEOPLE, ME?
YES... I WANT SOMEONE AS SHY AND SPIRITUALLY BEAUTIFUL AS YOU...

LET'S TAKE OFF YOUR MAKE-UP AND GO SOMEWHERE!
NO! NO! I CAN'T!
IT'S IM-POSSIBLE!
IT'S NOT MAKEUP!
THIS IS MY REAL FACE! MY REAL HANDS! I... I HAD AN ACCIDENT...
WHAT DID YOU DO... FALL IN A MEAT GRINDER?
LATER, IN RODDY SKEANE'S CRUMBLING HOTEL ROOM...
WHERE AM I? THE HOTEL FLEA-BAG?
YOU REALIZE, RODDY, THAT IF YOU BECOME A HIT A DOZEN PENTHOUSES COULD BE YOURS... OURS!
I WAS FAMOUS ONCE, LALA... BEFORE MY... UH...
BUT NEVER MIND... I'LL TELL YOU SOME OTHER TIME.
JUST THREE MORE HICK TOWN ENGAGEMENTS, MILADY MANAGER, AND WE'LL BE IN 'FRISCO!
I REALLY DON'T DESERVE YOUR GENER-OSITY, RODDY!
THE AUDIENCES ARE GETTING LARGER! IT'S A GOOD THING I LATCHED ON TO HIM IN TIME!
THE GROUPIES ARE OUT IN FORCE TONIGHT! THEY BETTER NOT GET TOO CLOSE...

AAHA! THERE'S SOME DIPPY LITTLE BROAD TRYING TO CUT IN ON MY TERRITORY!
DRESSING ROOM
SORRY, FELLOW GOLD DIGGER, BUT A GIRL MUST PROTECT HER INVESTMENTS!
SSSSMACK!
GUNNGHGHG!
SURPRISE, DARLING... OUR OWN QUAINT LOVE NEST!
WONDERFUL, LOVER! WHEN DO WE GET MARRIED?
SOON, I HOPE, BEFORE RIGOR MORTIS SETS IN!
A ROOM WITH A VIEW OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY! PERFECT FOR A HONEYMOON! WE'LL MARRY IN A WEEK, AFTER I INTRODUCE YOU TO MY GROUP...
I'D LIKE YOU TO SING WITH US!
UH-OH... COMPLICATIONS!
YES... YES... LET ME TAKE THAT DOWN... POP-ROCK MERCHANDISING, LTD. WHEN? THIS AFTERNOON? YES, WE'LL BE THERE.
HMM... JAQUES BEER, JEWELER... WEDDING RINGS OUR SPECIALTY...
THAT AFTERNOON, AFTER A SHORT VISIT TO THE JEWELERS...
RODDY? LALA? PLEEZTA MEETCHA! MY HANDLE'S JOE SMITH!
LALA HERE TIPPED ME ABOUT YOU, FELLA! MY FIRM CAN MAKE YOU A SUPER-GROOVY SUCCESS!
HOW DO YOU DO, JOE?
POP-ROCK

THE BOYS IN THE DISPLAY DEPARTMENT WORKED ALL DAY ON THIS YESTERDAY... HERE'S THE LINEUP... RODDY SKEANE POSTERS, MODEL KITS, BALOONS, BUBBLE GUM CARDS! MONSTER COMIC BOOKS WITH YOU AS HOST...
YOU'LL BE A HIT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE GENERATION GAP!
WE CAN EVEN GET A GROUP FOR YOU!
A WEREWOLF WITH SIDEBURNS! A DAY-GLO VAMPIRE!
LET ME HANDLE THIS AND YOU'LL MAKE A FORTUNE!
HOW DOES A FACE WHICH LOOKS LIKE A SKULL REGISTER HEARTBREAK... SHAME... EMBARRASSED DISSAPPOINTMENT?!
MONSTER MASKS! RUBBER HANDS! SKULL CANDY...
I... I ALREADY HAVE MY OWN GROUP, MR. SMITH...
WELL, WE'LL MEET AGAIN NEXT WEEK WITH YOUR, UH... FRIENDS...
LATER, MR. SMITH!
THEY WALKED PAST FILES OF SAN FRANCISCO'S "GINGERBREAD" HOUSES, A POUTING GIRL AND A SHATTERED SKELETON-MAN...
I THINK HIS IDEAS WILL MAKE YOU RICH RODDY!
YES, BUT BY ADVERTISING MY UGLINESS?
YOU'RE NOT REALLY UGLY, RODDY...
NO... YOU'RE UGLY IN AN UNREAL WAY!
THIS IS WHERE MY GROUP LIVES, LALA!
A MAUSOLEUM?!
WHAT A GIMMICK!

I NEVER CARED TO FIND OUT!
NO, YOU DIDN'T, RODDY...
I NEVER DID TELL YOU HOW I CAME TO LOOK LIKE THIS, DID I?
NOW DOWN ONE MORE FLIGHT OF STAIRS, TO THE CRYPTS!
RODDY, I HEAR STRANGE, EERIE MUSIC WAFTING UP FROM BELOW... IS THAT YOUR GROUP?!
AND THEN, LALA LOVE SAW WHAT SHE WOULD EVER REMEMBER TILL THE END OF TIME! A GROTESQUE, GYRATING SPECTACLE... THE UNDEAD MUSIC SHRIEKED, THE DANCERS WRITHED SPASMODICALLY...
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MY GROUP, LALA... THE DECREPIT CHORD!
STOP PLAYING, FELLAS!
HEY! RODDY'S BACK AMONG THE UNLIVING!
LALA, LET ME INTRODUCE MY GROUP, AND THEIR GROUPIES...!
JASON JONES; DRUMS... MICKEY MORTON; BASS... JEFF MINOX ON RHYTHM GUITAR,
AND MARY, MIMI AND GAYLE!

GROUP MEET LALA, LALA MEET GROUP...
LALA AND I WILL SOON BE WED... SHE'S OUR NEW MANAGER! SHE'S GOING TO MERCHANDISE OUR LOOKS AND MAKE US RICH!
FAR OUT!
WE NEED AN AGENT!
GOOD LORD! (CHOKE...)
RIGHT ON!
ZAPPO!
SHE SINGS FANTASTICALLY, TOO!
SHE'S WILLING TO BECOME PART OF THE GROUP... A MR. AND MRS. SHTICK, Y'KNOW?
ARE YOU SURE YOU REALLY WANT TO?
IT'S NOW OR NEVER! FAME AND RICHES OR... BACK TO THE STICKS!
YES, I REALLY WANT TO!
I'M SO GLAD YOU REALLY WANT TO BE ONE OF US, DARLING... TO BE LIKE US!... THIS SHOWS YOU REALLY DO LOVE ME!
A DIVORCE COURT WILL DECIDE THAT, HONEY...
...BUT WHEN I INTRODUCED YOU TO MY GROUP, I THOUGHT YOU'D FIGURE IT OUT...
JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "BE LIKE" YOU?!

...WE WERE ALL FAMOUS ONCE... DON'T YOU REMEMBER?! ...THE FAMOUS RITUAL MURDER OF...
YES, NOW I... I REMEMBER...
THE NEWSPAPERS SAID YOU ALL DIED IN A WITCHCRAFT CEREMONY!
YES, LALA, WE DID DIE...
TO BE BORN AGAIN!... BY A SPELL CAST FROM THE SACRED BOOK OF THE PROPHET LOVECRAFT!
THE SPELL ONLY WORKS ON CORPSES 5 DAYS DEAD! DON'T STRUGGLE, DARLING... YOU'LL LIVE UNDEAD FOREVER!
NO! NO! RODDY, PLEEEAASE!!
IN A WEEK WE'LL MARRY LALA...
THUK!
♪ MY LOVE IS LIKE A BLOOD-RED ROSE, WILTING IN THE GARDEN... ♪
SOON SHE WILL BE JUST LIKE ME, AND THEN WILL BE OUR WEDDING! ♪
A PALE, DEAD MOON STARES DOWN, TRANSFIXED, SERANADED DULLY BY AN EERIE, LONGING VOICE...
THE END

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER?
DONG DONG DONG
HE'S TALL, HE'S GAUNT AND RECKLESS. HE'S CRAFTY, CRUEL, AND SENSELESS...
DONG DONG DONG
DONG DONG DONG
THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER
WHA--?! THE SLASHER!
NO! NO! AAAGGHH!
HAVE YOU NEVER HEARD ABOUT THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? HE'S THE ONE WHO LURKS ON THE THRESHOLD OF FEAR--
THE SLASHER'S WORK, INSPECTOR RICHARDS! AND IT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT--JUST LIKE THE OTHERS!
HE SEEMS TO SELECT HIS VICTIMS AT RANDOM!
...SETTLES FOR WHOEVER'S AROUND AT MIDNIGHT!

WRITTEN BY DOUG MOENCH ILLUSTRATED BY PABLO MARCOS

"DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? HE'S THE ONE ON EVERYONE'S TONGUE..."
IT'S JUST BLOODY 'ORRIBLE, MISS WATTS! THE SLASHER DID IN ANOTHER ONE LAST NIGHT, AND WHAT ARE THE POLICE DOIN' ABOUT 'IM? NOTHIN' THEY AIN'T!
YOU WORRY TOO MUCH, MISSUS SHRIMPTON! THE POLICE WILL CATCH HIM SOON ENOUGH!
THE POLICE! HAH!--THEY NEVER CAUGHT SLY JACK, DID THEY? THE RIPPER MADE FOOLS OF THEM--JUST LIKE THE SLASHER'S DOIN'!
PLEASE, I'VE NO TIME FOR HYSTERICAL TALK. LEAVE ME ALONE!
HAVE YOU EVER SENSED THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? HE'S THE ONE WHO CREEPS OUTSIDE YOUR WALLS...
DONG DONG DONG
HE'LL SMASH YOUR WINDOWS... SMOTHER YOUR CRIES...
BRA KASH CHINKLE
DONG DONG
NO, GOD, N-NO...THE S-SLASHER! NO, NO...
DONG DONG DONG
IKRASHH!
AAAIIEEE!
DONG DONG DONG

SO YOU LEFT JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT, AND HEARD MISS WATTS SCREAMING...?
I RAN BACK TO SEE WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT! POOR MISS WATTS! WHAT ARE YOU POLICE GOIN' TO DO ABOUT IT!
FIRST OF ALL, WE'RE GOING TO BE COGNIZANT OF ALL THE FACTS. LEST WE UNDERTAKE SPECIOUS INTERPOLATIONS STEEPED IN SOPHISTRY OR INSIGNIFICANT ABSURDITY!
ACH, FANCY WORDS WON'T BRING YE ANY CLOSER TO THE SLASHER!
NEVERTHELESS, I THINK IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO PURSUE MY LINE OF INTERROGATION. NOW, THE SLASHER ENTERED THE BEDROOM THROUGH THE WINDOW...
HOW DID YOU KNOW HE CAME THROUGH THE WINDOW? YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE SCENE OF THE MURDER...
...WELL, ERR... I'VE STUDIED THE REPORTS MY MEN HAVE DELIVERED!
REPORTS! BAH! IF YOU DON'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SLASHER, I WILL! GOOD DAY, INSPECTOR!
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? HE'S THE ONE WHO'LL LEAVE HIS FOOTPRINTS ON YOUR SOUL.
DONG
DONG
DONG
THE BELLS!
MIDNIGHT-- WHEN MY FATHER DIED HERE, UNDER THE WHEELS OF A CARRIAGE, UNDER THE SOUND OF THE MADDENING BELLS--!

HE'S THE ONE POSSESSED OF INEFFABLE SUFFERING AND RECIPROCAL BLOOD-LUST.
THE BELLS! WHY SHOULD ANYONE LIVE AFTER DADDY HAS DIED?
DONG DONG DONG
HE'S THE ONE WHO DARTS FROM THE NIGHT IN A SWIRL OF GLEAMING CONFUSION...
DONG DONG
WHO--?
AAAAAIEEEK!!!
DONG
CHUK
CHOOK
THUK
...AND HE'S THE ONE WHO MELTS QUICKLY INTO FOG-SHROUDED GLOOM...
I WAS HERE BEFORE THE LAST BELL PEAL HAD DIED-- AND STILL THERE WAS NO TRACE OF HIM!
BEGGIN' YOUR PARDON, INSPECTOR, HOW DO YOU ALWAYS MANAGE TO ARRIVE ON THE MURDER SCENE SO QUICKLY?
IF YOU'RE HARBORING ANY SUSPICIONS FOR MY PUNTUALITY, OUT WITH THEM OFFICER WYMAN!
OH NO, SIR. I WAS JUST WONDERIN'... PAPERS HAVE BEEN HINTIN' THAT OUR SLASHER MIGHT BE OLD JACK COME BACK FOR A SECOND HELPING...
NO, OUR MURDEROUS MISCREANT IS DECIDEDLY MORE BRUTAL THAN JACK EVER WAS--THERE'S NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANATOMY IN EVIDENCE HERE, AND THE SLASHER DOESN'T USE A SCALPEL-- HE SETTLES FOR A COMMON KITCHEN KNIFE!
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, INSPECTOR, JACK WAS RATHER CHOOSY ABOUT HIS VICTIMS--THE SLASHER DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE WHO HE DOES IN--AS LONG AS IT HAPPENS AT MIDNIGHT!

TONIGHT I'LL STOP THE SLASHER *MYSELF*, I WILL! THESE OUTRAGEOUS MURDERS JUST CAN'T GO ON!
MUSTN'T ALLOW THIS MURDERER TO STRIKE AGAIN SO, TONIGHT *I* WILL END THE SLASHER'S BLOODY CAREER...
YOU...!
YOU...!
I THOUGHT *YOU* WERE...
AND I THOUGHT *YOU* WERE THE SLASHER TOO, MISSUS SHRIMPTON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT AT *THIS TIME?* IT'S ALMOST *MIDNIGHT*--
I'M TAKIN' IT UPON *MYSELF* TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE *SLASHER!*
YOU WERE *SERIOUS* THEN...? WELL STICK CLOSE TO ME. I'M GOING UP TO THE BELL TOWER. MAYBE THE BELL-RINGER *SAW* SOMETHING ON THE STREET LAST NIGHT...

IT'S SO DARK...
AND NEARLY MIDNIGHT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY TH-THAT...?
THE BELLS... BEGINNING TO PEAL...
HAVE YOU EVER MET THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? HE'S THE ONE YOU'D LEAST EXPECT...
...AND THE SLASHER MUST STRIKE!
Y-YOU'RE THE SLASHER--?! GOOD LORD, NO!
DONG
DONG
DONG
THE BELLS-- THE BELLS THAT KILLED DADDY--! MUST STOP THE BELLS!
DONG DONG
DONG
DONG
I'LL MAKE YOU STOP RINGING THOSE BELLS.
DONG
DONG
DONG!!
HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE MIDNIGHT SLASHER? SHE'S THE ONE WHO FINALLY ACHIEVED RETRIBUTION ON ...THE BELLS--AND RECEIVED THE SAME IN KIND...
THE End

Within the TORTURE CHAMBER!
--- AND BY ORDER OF THE INQUISITOR GENERAL, I--- JUDGE HERNANDEZ FUERTE--- ALLOW THE EXECUTION OF HERETIC ELENA CALCIN TO COMMENCE!
FURIOUSLY, DESPERATELY THE GIRL PULLS AT HER BONDS, HER MOIST, BULGING EYES HYPNOTIZED BY THE DULL PLATE OF SHARP IRON SPIKES INCHING HUNGRILY CLOSER! SOUNDLESS SCREAMS SHATTER UNHEARD ABOUT THE GRIMY STONE WALLS OF THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS! SHE HEARS THE SEEMINGLY DETACHED DRONE OF THE JUDGE WHO PRONOUNCES SENTENCE UPON HER, AND THE WORDS MEAN NOTHING! FOR THIS IS SPAIN OF THE 16TH CENTURY! THIS IS THE AGE OF THE INQUISITION!
SHE DIES! SHE DIES! HEE-HEEE!
HAVE YOU NOT NOTICED? HER TONGUE WAS REMOVED SOME DAYS AGO BY OUR SURGEONS! THE DEVIL KNOWS WHY! AND DON'T BE MORBID, JUDGE GARCIA! WE ARE OFFICERS OF THE LAW! WE ARE NOT HERE TO LEER AT THE PAIN OF OTHERS!
AHH--- THE INVENTIVENESS OF OUR LEADERS NEVER CEASES TO AMUSE ME, JUDGE FUERTE! BUT THE FLAVOR OF THIS TORTURE IS SOMEHOW SPOILED! OUR LOVELY VICTIM OPENS HER MOUTH, YET NO SCREAMS ISSUE FORTH!
DIABLO!

WRITTEN BY KEVIN PAGAN ILLUSTRATED BY DOUG WILDEY

JUDGE FUERTE IS REPELLED BY THE GLEEFUL, INSANE LAUGHTER OF GARCIA AND THE DROOLING LIPS OF THE EXECUTIONER! HE SHUTS HIS EYES! ATTEMPTS CONCENTRATION ON HIS LOYALTY TO HIS NATIVE COUNTRY! BUT THE LAUGHTER DROWNS THIS OUT, AND FUERTE KNOWS HE IS A PUPPET OF THE INQUISITION, HIS LOYALTY AND DEDICATION MISUSED!
WE HAVE ADDED ANOTHER CORPSE TO THE PILE OF HUNDREDS! AND SO MY DUTY IS DONE FOR THIS NIGHT!
OF COURSE, MY FRIEND! SURELY YOU ARE NOT OFFENDED BY A LITTLE HEALTHY BLOOD AND GORE! HAA! HAA!
HEE! HEE!
I'LL LEAVE HER BODY TO ROT TILL THE MORROW! PERHAPS THE NIGHT RATS MAY HAVE A FEAST!
FUERTE MIGHT BECOME AN IMPORTANT MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING ABOVE THESE CHAMBERS IF NOT FOR HIS WEAK STOMACH!
YOU MAY LEAVE THE ENTRANCE TO THIS DUNGEON UNGUARDED AGAIN, EXECUTIONER!
FOR, WHO WOULD DARE TO INTRUDE --- HERE?
FOR HOURS BEYOND THE INQUISITOR'S DEPARTURE, EERIE, WHISPERING TORCHLIGHT ILLUMINATES ONLY COLD, SOMBER STONE WALLS OF CRACKED AND CHIPPING MASONRY, OCCASIONALLY LIGHTING PATCHES OF FUR AS OVERSIZED RATS SCAMPER ALMOST NOISELESSLY IN DARK, SPECTRAL CORNERS! OUTSIDE, IN A WORLD ONLY QUESTIONABLY SANE, NIGHTFALL CONQUERS AND CURTAINS THE SKY! WITHIN, A YOUNG MANGLED BODY LIES CARELESSLY IN AN INSTRUMENT WHICH IS THE PRODUCT OF DISEASED MINDS!

THEN---
CRREEAKKK
CAUTIOUSLY, FEAR-HUNCHED, MOVES THE YOUNG NOBLE-MAN DOWN THE MUSTY, FILTH-COVERED STEPS TO THE INQUISI-TORY CHAMBER!
ELENA! I KNOW YOU CANNOT HEAR ME, YET I MUST SPEAK ONE MORE TIME WITH YOU!
GUILT SHAKES THE LOW VOICE OF DON ALEXANDRE GUISANTE, ONE BORN OF NOBLE BLOOD!
USING MY FAMILY'S WEALTH, I BRIBED SEVERAL "WITNESSES" WHO TESTIFIED IN COURT TO SEEING YOU PERFORM THE SECRET RITES OF SATAN! I KNEW EVEN THE SUSPICION OF SUCH HERESAY WAS PUNISH-ABLE BY THE INQUISITION'S SPECIAL BRAND OF DEATH!
I REGRET MY MURDER-OUS ACTS, ELENA! I AM TRULY SORRY YOU SUFFERED SUCH HORROR! I HAVE MADE MY WAY INTO THIS GROTESQUE, VILE-SMELLING TOMB TO TELL YOUR SPIRIT THIS!
PERHAPS MY HEART WILL CALM IF I CONFESS! IF MERELY TO YOUR UN-MOVING CORPSE! DO YOU REMEMBER MY OFFER OF MARRIAGE, ELENA? AND HOW YOU REJECTED ME?
FOR MONTHS AFTER, I FOUND I STILL LONGED FOR YOU! CRAVED YOUR UNTOUCHABLE BEAUTY! FINALLY, THE LONGING TRANSFORMED TO--- CONTEMPT--HATRED!
YOU NEVER SUSPECTED THAT I WAS BEHIND YOUR PLIGHT! YET, IN CASE YOU HAD, I PAID WELL SO THAT YOUR TONGUE MIGHT BE STILLED! AND CUT OUT!
PERHAPS I MAY SLEEP NOW, WITHOUT THE NIGHTMARES OF CONSCIENCE WHICH PLAGUE ME THESE SUCCEEDING NIGHTS!

POR DIOS! WHO ARE YOU?
I AM JUDGE FUERTE! HE WHO PRONOUNCED THE SENTENCE OF DEATH UPON THAT POOR GIRL! I RETURNED TO REMOVE HER MUTILATED BODY FROM THAT MONSTROSITY! ONLY TO HEAR A CONFESSION MOTIVATED BY SLUMBERLESS NIGHTS! NOT FROM ANY DECENCY OF CHARACTER! YOU HYPOCRITE! YOU HUMAN SLIME!
IN ADDITION TO THE DAILY SHAME I FEEL BENEATH THE UNHOLY FOOT OF THE INQUISITION, NOW I AM AN ACCESSORY TO MURDER! MY HANDS ARE STAINED WITH INNOCENT BLOOD!
ENOUGH! I FIND YOU GUILTY! AND SHALL CARRY OUT YOUR SENTENCE MYSELF!
STAY BACK! YOU FOOL! I HAVE STUDIED FENCING FROM THE MASTERS!
VIOLENT, UNLEASHED EMOTIONS ERUPT INTO FURIOUS SWORDPLAY IN THE GREAT CHAMBER! THE CLASH AND RINGING OF STEEL UPON STEEL RAISES A STEADY, FEVERISH DIN! FRIGHTENED DUNGEON RATS WHIMPER AND HURRY FOR SHELTER!
MURDERING COWARD... EEE-YAAAAH!!
POR DIOS! WHAT HAS MY FOOLISH HAND DONE? THE PENALTY FOR KILLING AN INQUISITOR JUDGE IS--- DEATH BY TORTURE! N-NO! NO! I MUST GET OUT OF HERE!

I MUST GET OUT!
A LAST FAINT CLANGOR OF SWORDS ECHOES AND FADES, REPLACED BY THE SHARP STACCATO OF RUNNING FEET! DON ALEXANDRE GUISANTE SCRAMBLES PANIC-STRICKEN UP THE STAIRCASE--- AND ABRUPTLY PARALYZES!
SLOWLY, ALMOST REVERENTLY, THE TREMBLING NOBLEMAN CREEPS BACK INTO THE GHOSTLY INTERIOR OF THE UNCLEAN CHAMBER!
THE SWORD! I LEFT IT BEHIND! CAN'T LET IT BE FOUND! MY FAMILY CREST IS INSCRIBED UPON IT!
YES! I MUST RETRIEVE MY SWORD! MY--- MY SWORD! I-- I LEFT IT---
-- IN THE JUDGE'S BODY!
I-- I'LL RETRIEVE IT QUICKLY, THEN LEAVE THIS LAIR OF THE DAMNED FOR ALL TIME! UGGH! IT IS IN DEEP! THIS LIGHT TRICKS MY VISION! I COULD SWEAR THE JUDGE'S EYES STARE AT ME!
THEY DO! NOOOO!!!

ONLY THE SUDDEN FLASH OF REASON PREVENTS THE NOBLEMAN FROM FLEEING! THAT, AND HIS STILL IMPALING SWORD!
MUST KEEP HOLD OF MY SENSES! EL ESTA MUERTO... HE IS DEAD! FUERTE CAN NOT HARM ME! I ONLY IMAGINE HIS ACCUSING STARE! HIS EYES ARE LIFELESS! LIFELESS!
I'VE GOT TO PULL HARDER! THE SWORD HAS TO COME FREE! DEAR GOD--IT HAS TO!!
HIS STOMACH REVOLTED BY THE OBSCENE RITUAL, GUISANTE CLENCHES HIS TEETH TO KEEP FROM RETCHING! HE TUGS WITH UNCHECKED FORCE! THEN, HE HEARS A SHORT, SICKENING SOUND AND THE BLADE SLIDES FREE!
TH--THE--- BLOOD! I CAN'T BEAR THE SIGHT OF--- AAAGGH!
A MOMENT! I NEED ONLY A MOMENT TO CALM DOWN! QUELL MY POUNDING HEART! LET MY BREATHING RETURN TO NORMAL! AND STRIKE THAT GRISLY SIGHT FROM MY BRAIN!
THEN I'LL FETCH THAT ACCURSED BLADE! AND DIG A GRAVE FOR IT SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE CONFINES OF MY FAMILY'S CASTLE! I AM SORRY NOW I EVER CAME TO THIS---
I FEEL THEM AGAIN! BORING INTO MY BACK! THOSE EYES... THE JUDGE'S EYES!

CAN FEAR DRIVE ONE TO THE DEPTHS OF SHOCK? YES! CAN THE SHOCK OF A SMALL CRIMSON POOL--- THE REMAINS OF A VANISHING CORPSE--- DRIVE ONE TO THE PITS OF MADNESS? YES!
NO! HE IS DEAD! MUERTE--- DEAD!
YOUUU!! AAIIIEEEEEE!!

MORNING IS A MEANINGLESS ELEMENT TO THE CONTINUALLY DARK, SHADOWY DUNGEON OF DEATH! IT INDICATES ONLY ANOTHER DAILY VISIT FROM ITS MORE INHUMAN MASTERS!
ODD THAT WE HAVE NOT YET ENCOUNTERED JUDGE FUERTE! HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ENTERTAINING A GUEST DOWN HERE LAST NIGHT, THOUGH! WHICH WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THE SCREAMING YOU HEARD! HA! HAA! I THOUGHT I GLIMPSED A TOUCH OF SADISM IN THE MAN!
IT IS TRUE, JUDGE GARCIA! AT MIDNIGHT, THE MOST EXTREME WAILING CAME FROM THIS CHAMBER! I DID NOT SUMMON THE COURAGE TO ENTER TILL NOW!

WE'LL SOON LEARN THE CAUSE OF SUCH HOWLING! BE NOT AFRAID, EXECUTIONER! NO MAN OR GHOST DARES CHALLENGE THE OFFICERS OF THE INQUISITION!
THE HERETIC GIRL'S BODY IS EXACTLY WHERE WE LEFT IT, AND I SEE NO SIGNS OF---!
MY JUDGE! OVER HERE--- IN THIS CORNER!

THE WILD-EYED, TIGHT-MOUTHED MANIAC STARES UNCOMPREHENDINGLY AT THE TWO INQUISITORS! EVEN THE GLOATING GARCIA IS UNNERVED BY THIS SPECIMEN OF TOTAL INSANITY!

EXCELLENCY! SOME PAPER IS TACKED ONTO THAT RACK! IT LOOKS LIKE AN OFFICIAL ORDER OF EXECUTION!
AH-HAAA! BRING IT TO ME AT ONCE!
IT READS--- "THE LUNATIC BEFORE YOU IS A MURDERER! TWICE-OVER! HIS IS THE LOWEST OF HEINOUS CRIMES! FOR NOT ONLY HAS HE MURDERED, BUT IN ADDITION PERJURED HIMSELF IN THE COURTS OF SPAIN! GIVEN FALSE TESTIMONY TO THE INQUISITION!"
"THE ULTIMATE SENTENCE IS DEMANDED! LET SUCH A ONE SUFFER DEATH BY TORTURE!" SIGNED, JUDGE HERNANDEZ FUERTE! HO! I WAS NOT MISTAKEN! THE HONORABLE JUDGE SHARES OUR VIEWS OF JUSTICE! UNCHAIN THE PRISONER!
WHAT WEIRD, BIZARRE THOUGHTS OCCUPY THE MIND OF A MADMAN? DOES HE ENDLESSLY RECALL THE SHOCKING, UNSPEAKABLE EXPERIENCE WHICH CAUSED HIS STATE? DOES HE EVEN FEEL THE SENSATION OF BEING ROUGHLY, BRUTALLY DRAGGED TO HIS FINAL DESTINATION? ONE OF PAIN AND HORROR?
I'LL USE MY FAVORITE INSTRUMENT ON HIM! HE SHALL ENDURE HOURS OF UNENDURABLE AGONY UNDER MY MANIPULATION! HE'LL BE MY MASTERPIECE OF PAIN! BUT, WHY IS HE SO SILENT? WHY DOESN'T HE SHRIEK, OR BABBLE, OR BEG FOR HIS LIFE?
BECAUSE OF A VERY STRANGE THING I JUST DISCOVERED, EXECUTIONER!
HIS TONGUE HAS BEEN CUT OUT!
HAA! HAA! HAA! HAAA!
THE End

MAN--OFTEN DESCRIBED AS HAVING BEEN BORN OF TWO FATHERS! THE FATHER KNOWN AS ***NATURE***, THE UNIVERSE, LIFE AND...***LOVE!*** AND THE FATHER KNOWN AS ***HORROR***, NIGHT, BLACKNESS AND ***DEATH!***

THE ***VAMPIRE***...GAUNT AND EMACIATED IN HIS THIRSTING FOR HUMAN ***BLOOD***, AND TREACHEROUS IN HIS TECHNIQUES OF ***TRAPPING*** HIS ***VICTIMS***...IS OF THAT FATHER OF UNHEAVENLY ORIGIN! AND SO IT BE A FITTING MEMORY THIS TALE... THAT THE GROTESQUE ***CREATURE-BAT*** DIE A MERCILESS DEATH IN...

THE ***TIME: ANCIENT ROME***...126 B.C. UNDER THE RULE OF GAIUS SEMPRONIUS GRACCHUS.

THE ***SETTING:*** THE GREAT ARENA... STADIUM OF MANY TRIALS OF COMBAT AND HONOR...NOW HOSTING THE ANNUAL CHARIOT RACE OF THE TRIBUNE'S FINEST HORSEMEN.

Vault of a Vampire

NIGHT HAS JUST FALLEN LIKE A SHROUD OVER THE THRONGS OF SENATORS, TRIBUNES AND PEASANTS ALIKE. EACH MAN...IN EAGER AND EVER WATCHFUL EYE TO THE OUTCOME OF THE GREAT RACE...LIGHTS A FLAMING TORCH TO THROW VIOLENT SHADOWS ON THE PERSPIRING FACES OF THE PERFORMERS AS THEY DRIVE THEIR FEVERED HORSES...

WRITTEN BY ALAN HEWETSON ILLUSTRATED BY SERGE MOREN

...DRIVING THEIR STEEDS AT A FRANTIC PACE AROUND A BEND! THE CROWDS SUDDENLY FALL QUIET AND A HUSH PERVADES THE ARENA AS A MAN LEAPS FROM THE HIGH WALL OF THE STADIUM AND LANDS WITH CRUSHING WEIGHT ON THE BACK OF THE LEAD RACER!
WITH MERCILESS AND UNREASONING STRENGTH THE ATTACKER BATTLES THE CHARIOTEER, KNOCKING FROM HIS GRASP THE REIGNS AND FORCING HIM TO HIS KNEES...
ARE YOU INSANE?.. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?..
AND THEN SLOWLY...IT IS MADE CLEAR TO THOUSANDS GATHERED IN THE STANDS JUST WHAT IT REALLY IS THE ATTACKER IS AFTER... BLOOD, WARM, RICH, FLOWING BLOOD FROM THE JUGULAR VEIN OF HIS VICTIM...FOR THE CROWD REALIZES ONLY TOO LATE THAT THEY ARE WITNESSING BEFORE THEIR VERY EYES A HIDEOUS ACT OF VAMPIRISM! THEY ARE POWERLESS TO ACT, FROZEN AT THE BIZARRE SPECTACLE UNFOLDING BEFORE THEM...THAT OF THE VILE CREATURE-BAT OF LONG LOST LEGEND SINKING HIS LONG GLEAMING FANGS AND SUCKING DRY THE LIFE-GIVING BLOOD OF AN INNOCENT MAN... POWERLESS TO ACT...FOR EACH MAN IS STRICKEN WITH THE SHUDDERING FEAR OF UTTER DIS-BELIEF!

HE ESCAPES...TO ARMS MEN...HE MUST NOT ESCAPE!
LOOK...THROUGH THE ARCH...SHADOWS FLICKERING BY OUR TORCHES!
SLING A SHOT AT HIM DAMON... IN THE HOPE OF STRIKING HIM IN FLIGHT!
MISSED...THE CREATURE ESCAPES INTO THE BLACKNESS OF NIGHT LIKE... A DEMON!
AYE...BUT STILL... LET US SEARCH IN THE HOLLOW YONDER...LEST HE SILENTLY HIDES BEHIND SOME DECEITFUL ROCK!
NOTHING... HE'S RUN INTO THE FOREST!
WE'LL NOT FIND HIM THERE... TONIGHT...THE MANY TREES WOULD HIDE HIM WELL!
TRUE...HE'S DISAPPEARED... BUT WE MUST TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THIS IN THE FUTURE!
DAMON'S WORDS HAVE GOOD MEANING MEN...THIS CREATURE HAS STUCK TOO OFTEN... TOO SUDDENLY...TO BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE!
AYE...THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME HE HAS STRUCK... LAST MONTH IT WAS GENERAL PROCCHIUS... LAST WEEK STUNNED HUNDREDS BY ATTACKING A YOUNG WOMAN IN THE TRIBUNE'S OWN HANGING GARDENS! WHERE WILL IT BE NEXT...THE SENATE ITSELF?
THAT FIEND IS LIKELY TO SHOW UP ANYWHERE! BUT USUALLY, YOU MIGHT NOTICE... HE LIKES CROWDS...
TRUE MARCUS... HE MUST BE A THRILL SEEKER... OUT FOR MORE THAN BLOOD ONLY...BUT FOR PERVERSE PLEASURE IN SEEING MISERY IN THE FACES OF ONLOOKERS!
THEN WE MUST BE READY...WE MUST ATTEND EVERY SOCIAL FUNCTION WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS...AND WHEN THE MONSTER ATTACKS...WE'LL HAVE HIM!

IF HE'S HERE TONIGHT ...AT THE PARTY OF SENATOR GATTUS...HE SHOULD STRIKE BEFORE LONG!
THAT IS SO...BUT HE'S NOT BEEN HEARD OF IN WEEKS...DO YOU THINK HE STAYS IN HIDING ALL THIS TIME?
IT'S POSSIBLE DAMON... BUT STILL WE MUST BE READY...IF HE EVER... WHAT'S THAT NOISE...
HELP...
AAAAUUGHHH!
GET AWAY... DARE YOU SEEK SUCH A BEAUTY AS YOUR VICTIM?
GET HIS HEAD... PULL AT HIS HEAD...HE'S AS STRONG AS AN OX!
AGAIN THE VAMPIRE STRIKES...AGAIN HIS TEETH DIG DEEP INTO THE NECK OF A HELPLESS VICTIM--THIS TIME, A YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHO HAPPENED TO CROSS HIS PATH--AND SO ONCE AGAIN AN INNOCENT FALLS BEFORE THE TITANIC DEBAUCHERY OF THE CREATURE OF EVIL..
AYE...HE FIGHTS LIKE A MADMAN BUT...
UGGHHH!

QUICKLY... HE MUST NOT ESCAPE AGAIN!
MARCUS...TORCHES ...BRING TORCHES FOR THE NIGHT OR WE'LL LOSE HIM!
FASTER...HE'LL BE AWAY IF WE DON'T GRAB HOLD OF HIM BEFORE LONG...HIS RUNNING LEGS HAVE TOO MUCH SPEED!
AGAIN HE MAKES WAY INTO THE NIGHT...FOR THERE IN THE DARKNESS AND MANY RUINS OF AN EMPIRE WILL HE FIND ESCAPE...PERHAPS ...IF ONLY HIS PURSUERS WERE NOT TOO DETERMINED ON HIS CAPTURE!
AND YET IT SEEMS THAT THIS NIGHT THE FIEND HAS BEEN CARELESS... HIS CRYPT--THE TOMB OF HIS ETERNAL REST IS CLOSE AT HAND TO THE SCENE OF HIS UGLY CRIME...AND BEING CHASED HE HAS THOUGHTLESSLY RETURNED TO HIS VAULT WITHOUT THINKING...WITHOUT REALIZING HE HAS LED HIS PURSUERS TO HIS VERY FRONT DOOR...

LOOK...OVER THERE...IN THE FLEETING SHADOWS ...IS THAT NOT HIM DESCENDING INTO A VAULT?
IT MUST BE HIS! THE FOOL...DOES HE NOT REALIZE HE HAS LED US TO HIS VERY GRAVE?
FOOL IS RIGHT ...FOR BEFORE LONG IT WILL BE HIS GRAVE FOREVER!
AYE...HE HAS INDEED TRAPPED HIMSELF. FOR ALTHOUGH HE MUST HAVE THE DOOR BOLTED ON THE INSIDE...WE HAVE IT GUARDED FROM THE OUTSIDE!
HE'LL NOT GET OUT WITHOUT OUR KNOWING ...AND WHEN HE DOES WE'LL BE ARMED...
MARCUS...RUN FOR SILVER TIPPED KNIVES AND SWORDS ...AND BRING FOOD, TOO...WE'LL NOT LEAVE THIS CRYPT UNTIL HE HAS EMERGED.
THAT SHOULD NOT BE LONG...HE'LL HAVE NO FOOD IN THERE...AND SURELY HE CANNOT SURVIVE LONG WITHOUT IT...NOR WITHOUT HIS THIRST FOR BLOOD!

AND SO STARTS A VIGIL FOR THE THREE AVENGERS OF SOCIETY...WAITING... WATCHING...FOR A TERROR STRICKEN BLOOD FIEND TO GIVE IN...TO ADMIT DEFEAT AND TAKE HIS CHANCES OUTSIDE! TO OPEN THE DOOR THAT BARS OUT HATE AND REVENGE FOR HE AND HIS KIND--OR...TO SUFFER A FATE PERHAPS WORSE THAN THAT OF A VIOLENT DEATH...THAT OF SLOW... PAINFUL...AGONIZING...STARVATION WITHIN!
HE MUST BE DEAD!
AYE—IT'S BEEN OVER TWO WEEKS...NO MAN, NO MAN CAN LIVE WITHOUT SUSTAINANCE FOR THIS LENGTH OF TIME...
WE'D BEST BREAK IN... IF HE'S NOT DEAD HE'LL BE VERY WEAK... IT WON'T BE MUCH OF A FIGHT!
WE'LL HAVE IT IN A FEW MOMENTS...
IT'S WELL BARRED FROM THE OTHER SIDE...AND THE WOOD IS THICK AND HEAVY...
BY THE ANCIENT GODS...
OH...IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY ...WHAT HAS HAPPENED...WHAT HAS HE DONE?
HE' STILL STRONG...BE READY ...BE ON GUARD WITH YOUR SWORDS...
OH GODS... WHAT VILE MOCKERY OF A MAN IS THIS... THIS... THING BEFORE US?
WE CANNOT VIEW THE WRETCHED THING IN THIS UTTER DARKNESS!
BRING FORTH MORE LIGHT SO THAT WE CAN SEEK OUT THIS MENACE THAT AFFLICTS US!

VILE CREATURE... WHAT MANNER OF BEAST CAN YOU BE?
DIE GLADLY WE RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR SEMI-HUMAN VESTMENTS OF LIFE...
HIDEOUS...IS IT POSSIBLE... CAN IT REALLY BE THAT MY EYES DO NOT DECEIVE ME... CAN IT ACTUALLY BE THAT THIS...THIS BLOOD DEMON HAS STAYED ALIVE BY... DEVOURING HIS OWN BODY...HIS OWN HUMAN FLESH!
AAAAAUUUGGHHHH!
AND SO DEATH COMES QUICKLY...PERHAPS FAR TOO QUICKLY FOR HE WHO HAS LIVED A LIFE OF TERROR AND OUTRAGEOUS ATROCITY...THE VAMPIRE... GAUNT AND EMACIATED IN HIS THIRSTING FOR HUMAN BLOOD...IS OF THAT FATHER ON UNHEAVENLY ORIGIN... AND SO IT BE IN FITTING MEMORY THIS TALE...THAT THE GROTESQUE CANNIBAL DIE AN UNENVIABLE DEATH IN...VAULT OF A VAMPIRE!
SERG MORENO

EDITED BY
CIMMERIAN32
Keep on Seedin'...
Demonoid User

scanned by

CIMMERIAN32